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Message Text

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72
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AF-10 ARA-11 EA-11 NEA-10 RSC-01 AGR-20

CEA-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-11 FRB-02 H-02

INR-10 INT-08 L-03 LAB-06 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 AID-20

CIEP-02 SS-15 STR-08 TAR-02 TRSE-00 USIA-12 PRS-01

OMB-01 RSR-01 /208 W
---------- 103656
R 181655 Z MAY 73
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8847
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
USMISSION BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION OECD PARIS

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E. O. 11652: N/ A
TAGS: EARG, IT
SUBJECT: EFFORTS BY GOI TO PROTECT ITS CITRUS INTERESTS

DEPT PASS AGRICULTURE

REF: ROME 4059, 3716, 3501, 2971, EC BRUSSELS 2684, 2551

BEGIN SUMMARY. ASIDE FROM RECENT ITALIAN PROPOSALS TO EC COUNCIL
IN FRAMEWORK OF MEDITERRANEAN POLICIES (REFTELS), GOI APPARENTLY
INTENDS TO US PHYTOSANITARY WEAPON TO PROTECT ITALIAN CITRUS
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FROM OUTSIDE COMPETITION, AGAINST WHICH ITALIAN IMPORT TRADE

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REACTS STRONGLY. END SUMMARY.

1. PREVIOUS REPORTS OF THIS MISSION ON SUBJECT (ROME 3716, 3501, 2971), INDICATED VAGUENESS AS TO WHAT MINAG REALLY WAS AFTER IN USING PHYTOSANITARY LEGISLATION TO PROTECT CITRUS INTERESTS. WE ALSO NEVER RECEIVED OTHER THAN VERBAL ASSURANCE THAT IMPORT LICENSES ON GRAPEGRUIT WOULD BE CONTINUED BEYOND THE JULY 1 DEAD-LINE THROUGH THE FULL CALENDAR YEAR.

2. FOLLOWING UP ON EMBOFF' S DISCUSSIONS WITH MFA AND MINAG, AGATT TODAY MET WITH SPOKESMAN FOR NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EXPOR-TERS AND IMPORTERS OF FRUITS AND CITRUS FRUITS, WHO INFORMED US ON YESTERDAY' S MEETING OF ASSOCIATION AND ITS EXPRESSED CONCERN OF WHAT GOI HAS IN MIND.

3. MINAG IS IN PROCESS OF EDITING A PROVISIONAL DECREE WHICH WOULD LIMIT IMPORTATION OF CITRUS AND THUS ALSO OF GRAPEFRUIT TO PERIOD OCTOBER- MARCH, USING PHYTOSANITARY ARGUMENT THAT DISEASES ARE IN-FLICTED BY IMPORTED CITRUS DURING BLOOMING PERIOD OF CITRUS TREES (OUR OBSERVATION: THESE TREES STOP BLOOMING IN MAY). IT SEEMS THAT CONFAGRICOLTURA (ROME 3501) HAS PUSHED THIS PROPOSAL WHICH WAS ALREADY INTRODUCED BUT SHELVED IN 1970. ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN BY DECREE SINCE PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL OF LEGISLATION NOT POSSIBLE BY END OF JUNE.

4. IMPORTERS- EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION HAS STRONGLY URGED ITALIAN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE TO LIMIT DURATION OF MEASURE TO NOT MORE THAN ONE YEAR, BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE WHEREBY SUCH PROVISIONS HAD LIFE SPAN OF MANY YEARS. ASSOCIATION ALSO PROTESTS AGAINST USING PHYTOSANITARY WEAPON FOR TRADE POLICY OBJECTIVES. IT WANTS GOI TO CHANGE PRESENT PHYTOSANITARY LEGISLATION WHICH PROHIBITS ALL IMPORTS OF FRESH FRUITS IN PRINCIPLE ON WHICH THE EXCEPTIONS ARE GIVEN TO ONE WHICH ONLY STIPULATES WHICH FRUITS CAN NOT BE IMPORTED FOR TRULY PHYTODANITARY REASONS THUS DIVORCING PHYTOSANITARY REASONS FROM POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY.

5. SEEMINGLY MINAG HAS FOR QUITE SOME TIME BEEN PLAYING WITH THESE IDEAS AND WHICH EXPLAINS WHY - CONTRARY TO 1972 - IMPORT LICENSES FOR GRAPEFRUIT WERE THIS YEAR ONLY GIVEN FOR THREE MONTH PERIODS.

6 SOUTH AFRICA EMBASSY, BASED ON ABOVE INFORMATION, HAS ALREADY PROTESTED AND WAS VAGUELY TOLD NOT TO WORRY ABOUT ITS GRAPEFRUIT IMPORTS AFTER JULY 1.

7. INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT PREVIOUSLY ITALIANS HAD TRIED TO MAKE DEAL WITH ARGENTINIANS GRANTING ARGENTINA SPECIAL GRAPEFRUIT TREATMENT IF ARGENTINA WOULD EXPORT FEEDER CALVES WHICH ARGEN-TINA WAS UNABLE TO DO.

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8. SINCE ORDERS FOR WEST COAST GRAPEFRUIT FOR JULY ARRIVAL IN ITALY ALREADY PLACED, WE SHALL EXPRESS OUR CONCERN WITH MFA AND MINAG, PRESSING FOR EXTENSION OF IMPORT LICENSES THROUGH THE FULL CY. VOLPE

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